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ABSTRACT

Three presentations are provided from Symposium 16, Improving Human Resource Development (HRD) Practice through Research, of the Academy of HRD 2000 Conference Proceedings. "Why HRD Practitioners Can Lack Respect: Sizing the Credibility Gap between What Top Managers Want and HRD Professionals Deliver" (Robert L. Dilworth, Timothy McClernon) reports a study in which HRD scholars and practitioners looked at issues and available research to arrive at 10 reasons why HRD practitioners can be seen as outside the mainstream of business and lack credibility. "Issues in Human Resource Development in Central and Eastern Europe" (Geoff Chivers) describes a study of problems, causes, and solutions. A large scale empirical study in the Baltic States and Slovenia is combined with data from less formal visits to organizations in Central and Eastern Europe and the literature to generate conclusions and recommendations for improvements. "Human Resource Professional Support for Work-Based Management Development" (Jean Woodall) reports the following findings of a project investigating senior HR professionals' awareness and encouragement of work-based management development: they were very enthusiastic about this activity, but were not well-informed about the forms it could take; were uncertain about the acceptability of using developmental challenges; and did not have conscious strategies for support, guidance, and facilitation through work-based activities. The papers contain references. (YLB)

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Why HRD Practitioners Can Lack Respect: Sizing the Credibility Gap Between What Top Managers Want and HRD Professionals Deliver

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There has been a great deal of discussion in recent years about the credibility of HRD practitioners. Does what they do and deliver make a difference in the "bottom line" of the business? How well integrated are the HRD specific programs with the overall strategies of the business? A small team of HRD scholars and practitioners looked at the issues involved and available research in arriving at ten reasons why HRD practitioners can be seen as outside the mainstream of the business and lack credibility. Their findings were then used to leverage a "threaded dialogue" over the Internet by HRD scholars and practitioners around the world.

Keywords: HRD Credibility

Some issue areas are difficult to address. Given all the important contributions made by those who consider themselves HRD practitioners, talking about credibility problems in the profession can be an uncomfortable endeavor. While there has been a healthy tendency to admit that professional practice may be lagging behind real-world business needs in certain areas, there has been less inclination to try and isolate perceived shortfalls and their causes.

It can also be difficult to clearly identify gaps between what the top leadership of a company wants and HRD practitioners deliver. It is not necessarily what you talk about in open forums. Such problems are usually held closely within the organizations experiencing them. In fact, such problems may well prove "undiscussable" within the companies involved. HRD can as a result live what might be called a "twilight existence". HRD is there and does its job, but not always to the accompaniment of high praise. If there is dissatisfaction, it can be quietly expressed via termination of employment and selective "downsizing" of the human resources function. When displeasure is expressed openly, it frequently relates to the inability of HRD to prove relevancy or deliver metrics that unequivocally prove linkage of HRD interventions to performance, productivity and profitability.

For all the reasons already given, examination of shortfalls between what HRD delivers and the top leadership wants is a complex undertaking. The fact that it is difficult to research probably accounts for the lack of a strong and definitive research history in this area.

Problem Statement

What are the gaps between what HRD delivers and top leaders and managers want? What does the research show? If there are gaps, what are they? How can we go about closing or at least narrowing them?

Theoretical Framework

Several HRD scholars and practitioners (most qualify as both) associated with the Research Department and the Research and Practice Committee of the American Society for Training and Development (ASTD) labored for the better part of a year with this multi-faceted problem statement. The Research Department is internal to ASTD. The National Research and Practice Committee is affiliated with the Research Department and is made up of scholars and practitioners who volunteer their time to encourage research studies related to Human Resource Development, stimulate the wider dissemination of research findings related to the field and promote a broader understanding of research design and methodology. The Research and Practice Committee has a rich blend of scholars and

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practitioners, including senior corporate HRD practitioners from companies like General Motors, Andersen Worldwide, Union Carbide, and Lockheed Martin. The universities involved include Columbia, Johns Hopkins, Oklahoma State, Virginia Commonwealth, Marymount and Indiana State. The Center for Creative Leadership is also represented, as are a number of consulting firms; such as, W. Warner Burke Associates, Inc.; People Architects, Inc.; and, the Institute for Strategic Learning. For this particular investigation, five individuals became most directly involved, with the internal Research Department and Research Committee of ASTD operating as a seamless entity:

1. Robert L. Dilworth, Associate Professor, Virginia Commonwealth University.
2. Timothy R. McClernon, Principal Partner, People Architects, Inc.
3. Lyle Yorks, Professor, Teachers College, Columbia University.
4. John Redding, Executive Director, Institute for Strategic Learning.
5. Mark VanBuren, ASTD's Director of Research.

The proposal authors were a part of this effort. Much of the work was done through independent review of research sources. Each investigator also had a network of associates in business and higher education that they could tap into for ideas. There were also innumerable teleconferences over the course of a year, as well as frequent e-mails that shared what was being learned, and even a few revelations.

In a sense, the "Gap Team", as it came to be called, cast its net widely. It then progressively sifted what was being uncovered in looking for common themes. The scope of what was being identified was gradually narrowed down and clarified. It was a tedious and at times frustrating process. The theoretical framework was both inductive and deductive. The team looked for specific indications of problems even as it looked at the big picture, including the dynamics of the global market environment and business climate in which HRD is embedded.

The idea of creating web sites centered on real issues facing the profession, germinated as this effort was underway. It resulted from two publications released by ASTD in 1997. Both of these publications were under the general title of "What Works". One publication addressed several areas related to Training and Development Practices and the other focused on Assessment, Development, and Measurement. It seemed the appropriate time to pursue a real time on-line approach to creating dialogue in critical areas, with even a tighter link between research and practice. The desire to create a web-based dialogue mechanism ended up being combined with the efforts of the Gap Team. The research cited in this proposal constituted the pilot test in moving to a more web-based approach to critical dialogue.

Research Questions and Propositions

Three questions drove the research. They set the stage for the ASTD web site that was launched in late October, 1999. These questions are:

1. Why does HRD often experience low levels of credibility within our organizations?
2. Why do many of our senior managers see HRD as not being a credible contributor to the bottom line?
3. Why do so many managers continue to believe that the cost of training is more than the benefit to the organization?

Methodology and Research Design

The "Gap Team" worked to develop the "leading reasons" of why HRD professionals can end up enjoying "little or no respect." Arriving at the list was an iterative process. In the end, ten over-arching reasons for failure to earn respect were identified. In each case, the Gap Team developed the following substructure:

1. Sound familiar? Examples were developed of the type of situations commonly associated with a given reason.
2. What do we know? Factors bearing on the problem and ways to overcome it were cited, as well as research studies that can provide added information.
3. What can you do? Here, specific remedies were outlined.

Those wishing to have background information on a research study being cited can directly index a one-page summary of the research study that is a part of the web site. The summaries of research studies are organized as follows:

1. Author.
2. Year.
3. Title.
4. Source.
5. What was done?
6. What was the bottom line?
7. What does this mean to me?

The Gap Team results were then built into a special web site that allows members of the profession to call up and review the investigative results in a variety of ways.

Because the report was the product of a small team of investigators, two additional steps were taken before opening up the web site to threaded conversations/dialogue around the issues. The first step was to have a group of leading scholars, individuals who had not been involved with the study, visit the web site and open up a dialogue that could later serve as a "discussion starter". The next step was to have leading HRD practitioners visit the site and do the same thing. These two preliminary steps also served to underwrite the study effort, surface points of view that had been overlooked and identify any additional research sources. They served to triangulate what had been turned up by the Gap Team. Did the team miss something? Was there another way to view earlier study results?

Following these two "discussion starter" steps, the web site was opened up to anyone having an interest in entering the dialogue. From a "research design" point of view, the process used is considered a very effective way to bringing informed dialogue to bear on a critical area. The "Gap Team" in effect, prepared the "playing field" for the profession at large.

Results and Findings

The top ten reasons identified for the gap (why the profession can fail to enjoy respect) were:

We don't understand how globalization impacts HRD.
We are kept out of the loop.
We don't/can't take the initiative.
We don't know how to prove the value of HRD.
We have a narrow range of skills.
We are part of HR functions that also lack credibility.
We keep using the same hammer: classroom training.
We spend time doing things that senior managers do not value.
We disagree with senior managers about the purpose of HRD.
We don't know much about our business.

All of the reasons are significant, but in order to show the texture of the findings, as ultimately made available on the web, reason number 4 will be looked at in depth. This will also allow a full examination of the format used. What follows is a verbatim extract from the web site presentation.

Reason No. 4: We don't know how to prove the value of HRD.

Sound Familiar?

1. "I know this training program makes sense. But I can't prove it in dollars and cents. I can't do a Kirkpatrick Level 4 evaluation and an ROI analysis on every training program".
2. "Our company keeps talking about how customers are important. Yet the only thing we seem to really care about are sales and profits".

What we do know.

1. Certain types of HRD programs (if executed very well) can produce an 8:1 return on investment. However, most managers do not recognize the potential financial impact of training.
2. Not all HRD programs should be measured in terms of short-term financial results. Probably the best measures are those that are directly related to the company's business strategies.
3. There is still a strong tendency to use financial measures as the major way to measure business performance. However, this is changing. Most companies are currently trying to implement balanced scorecard systems that treat non-financial measurements (including human resource related issues) as important as financial measurements.
4. It is possible to create a value-chain analysis that will directly link key HRD factors to business performance. Sears has done this very successfully.
5. It is not always necessary to do a Level 3 or Level 4 (Kirkpatrick) assessment. Well-designed-Level 1 evaluations are effective in predicting changes in performance.

Study Resources. Six study resources were provided and are listed below. While other pertinent studies were identified during the literature review, they were not considered in-depth research.

1. Training Investment Can Mean Financial Performance (Bassi, 1998).
2. Improving the Corporate Disclosure Process (Eccles & Mavsinac, 1994).
3. The Value of Training in the Era of Intellectual Capital (Conference Board Report, 1997).
4. The Balanced Scorecard: Translating Strategy into Action (Kaplan & Norton, 1994).
5. The Employee-Customer Profit Chain at Sears (Rucci & Quinn, 1998).
6. Demonstrating the Financial Benefit of Human Resource Development: Status and Update on the Theory and Practice (Swanson, 1998).

What Can You Do?

1. For programs that are designed to produce immediate, short-term impact on financial performance (many sales programs fit into this category), conduct ROI studies to show training's financial impact.
2. Find out if your company is implementing a balanced scorecard system, or a similar measurement system. If so, learn all you can about it. Help the company develop useful HR related measures as part of the scorecard. Use the balanced scorecard measures to assess the effectiveness of HRD initiatives.
3. Work with senior managers to do a value-chain analysis, in which HRD factors are directly related to business performance.
4. Modify your Level 1 assessments to focus on two questions: (1)What have you learned that will help you back on the job? (2) Do you intend to apply what you have learned back on the job?

Summary: The brief sketch-out just provided reflects the conciseness of the commentary around each reason for limited credibility and how to deal with it. Address of other reasons is equally straightforward, with each designed to provide a platform and stimulus for informed dialogue.

Conclusions and Recommendations

1. There is merit in building a framework for review of an important topic area in the profession, as was done in this case. It began with a team of respected scholars and practitioners who came to believe that their own dialogue advanced understanding of an area that has not received much research attention. That effort then transitioned into use of the World Wide Web as a medium for even broader debate.
2. The review effort undertaken was useful in determining areas that seem to require additional research in relation to research credibility. For example, it clearly points to the need to develop better ways of measuring the impact of HRD on business success.
3. The design of this "research" excursion caused emphasis to be placed on the relationship of research to practice.

4. Such an investigative process provides for in-depth probing of areas that can help define the profession and trace the cutting edge.
5. This type of effort allows for experimentation in effective use of the World Wide Web to accelerate and broaden our ability to focus on key areas quickly. The process is much faster and more comprehensive than developing ideas in books and journal articles (if not electronic) where the dialogue tends to be initially one-way, discontinuous and slow to materialize.
6. The act of generating information and reflecting on a critical issue area represented a substantive learning experience for those who engaged in this effort under the aegis of ASTD.

How this Research Contributes New Knowledge in HRD

As already suggested, there are several ways such research can contribute new knowledge to the profession:

1. It brings key scholars and practitioners together around what is considered to be a critical topic area.
2. In terms of research design, it directly relates research to practice.
3. The concentrated integration of existing studies with perceived shortfalls in HRD credibility, as occurred in this study effort created *new knowledge.*
4. The design of the research in this instance caused a wide-ranging environmental scan to take place vis-à-vis HRD as a profession. Such efforts can only serve to better define the field, pinpoint areas in need of improvement, extend the cutting edge by leveraging research resources and 'thought leaders" and help create a learning community in the profession.

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Issues in Human Resource Development in Central and Eastern Europe

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Despite evident commitment of former communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe to education and training in the cause of national modernisation, there are now serious problems in the HRD field. This study addresses the main problems and considers their causes and how these may be overcome. A large scale empirical study in the Baltic States and Slovenia is combined with data obtained from less formal visits to organisations in Central and Eastern Europe, and literature available in English to generate general conclusions and recommendations for improvements.

Key words: Central and Eastern Europe, Vocational Education and Training Reform.

As contact with the former communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe continues to grow, the opportunities increase for a deeper dialogue about lifelong learning between Western European HRD experts and senior managers of public and private organisations undertaking modernisation programmes. (Autleytner, 1999). The European Commission is very aware of the need to develop the state education and training systems in all the central and eastern countries of Europe which are pressing to join the European Union, (the pre-accession countries). A large number of collaborative projects have now been funded by the European Commission with the aim of bringing expertise from Western European countries to the assistance of leaders of organisational change in the context of developing younger and older people to cope with the challenges facing the former communist countries.

The author has been involved in a number of such projects and has had the opportunity to travel to a number of the countries concerned to investigate the situation and advise as appropriate. This paper is based on these experiences and raises research questions which are relevant to most of the Central and Eastern European countries as follows:

1. Given the commitment of the post war Communist governments to strong state education and training systems in the quest for modernisation, why are these now seen as so poorly developed for the next millennium?
2. Why is the concept of HRD so alien to most work organisations in the public and private sectors (leaving aside western companies now established in Central and Eastern Europe)?
3. Why is learning seen as difficult to carry out except within the context of didactic class based teaching methods, such that open and distance learning methods for example are still so poorly developed?

Research Approach

As indicated above, the research reported here has been conducted on an opportunistic basis, largely as an offshoot of practical development project work, or short term consultancy. Indeed, the research questions above have been driven deeper into the author's psyche by the fact that so many evidently different problems in different countries have boiled down to the same problems.

As time has passed during the 1990's these questions have moved increasingly to centre stage, so that during visits to relevant countries, and when the author has received visitors from these countries, increasingly purposeful efforts have been made to gather more data relevant to the questions.

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The data collection approaches have included interviews with a very wide variety of stake holders in the business of learning, from government ministers to members of chambers of commerce, and from professors to students, and schoolchildren. A large volume of publications has been collected from the countries where projects have been carried out. While there can be language problems, a surprising number of such documents are in English, partly due to the requirements of the European Commission relating to the national accession programmes for future EU membership. The European Commission itself has been a valuable source of information, and more so the European Training Foundation in Turin, which has a major role in regard to modernising vocational training systems in Central and Eastern Europe.

Standard literature searching has been of some value (Kulich, 1995) although the focus of much literature on the social, economic and political problems of the former communist countries is on finance, marketing and the steps to improve quality and productivity of manufacturing, etc, rather than on learning and HRD. A few quotations best illustrate the nature and extent of the problems faced by Central and Eastern European countries in the years following the collapse of the Communist system.

Dietrich and Kurzydlowski (1992) state:

> "Modern Polish industry has to a large extent developed under strict central planning and as such is characterised by a low standard of competitiveness. Polish industry is based on large, inefficient state-owned enterprises hiring thousands of workers and run by executives with little knowledge of what it takes to compete in a market economy. In addition, the decision making process is hampered by a lack of clear regulations defining the duties of managers."

Driefelds (1996, p129) writing about manufacturing in Latvia following the Soviet period states:

> "One of the most invidious relics of the old system is lack of competition. Factories became complacent because they had an assured market and hence issues of price, quality, variety and customer orientation did not receive much attention. Soviet factories often became centres for socializing and welfare with production and work taking on secondary importance. Questions of discipline and labor productivity could not be resolved under conditions of labor scarcity.
>
> As yet, the dominant orientation of managers is to protect their redundant workers by keeping them on the payroll. For example, during the first two months of 1993, 16 per cent or 343,000 of the paid industrial workers had not worked a single day in their enterprises. Such artificial maintenance of employees increases the cost of production and of products, that, as a result, become less competitive and often cannot be sold. The working employees cannot receive increases in wages because of this burden of "hidden unemployment" and their productivity and work satisfaction decrease and they become demoralised. All this misplaced paternalism only increases the likelihood of a total shutdown of production"

Klenovsek (1998 p47) reports for Slovenia:

> "It now became clear that in the centralised (socialist) economy there used to be employed a non-productive (unproductive) workforce. By the end of the eighties it became evident that this was the cause of the bad productivity results and of productivity decreases which had been going on for several years. In 1992, when the registered unemployment rate grew rapidly to 13.8% we still believed that the growth would somehow get stabilised within the following five year period. The most optimistic prognosis had even predicted its decrease. Unfortunately the data showed the opposite, the registered unemployment rate shows an increase to 15% in 1995, a slight decrease in 1996. In 1997 it has been around 14.5% (last December there were 128,572 unemployed people in Slovenia)."
>
> Klenovsek (1998, p48) goes on to report on market conditions and government interventions to deal with the unemployment problem as follows:
>
> "The labour market condition is still rather bad which is particularly true for specific groups of the unemployed.

There is a particularly poor offer of free jobs in new areas. For the last two years we have been noticing an increased structural unemployment, which means that for some specific jobs there is no properly qualified or trained workforce. Partly we try to solve this issue by training the unemployed. But this does not happen in an intense enough way."

Velovski (1995, p70) writing of the particularly difficult labour market situation in Macedonia, following independence from Yugoslavia, refers to the tendency for the education system to exacerbate the situation:

> "------ education appears as an agency in the accumulation of (a) surplus of cadres and (an) increase of unemployment in the country. This kind of phenomenon is especially present in the sphere of university education. In the race for higher profitability, the university institutions register and produce cadres in such a dimension that the labour market in the state would not be able to absorb them for the next 20 years. If this kind of educational and registration policy continues, Macedonia has a chance to rise to a high point among the countries in the world with the highest rate of functionally non-useful university educated cadre.
>
> The situation of the unemployed without any qualification is alarming as well. If we take into account the escalation of modernisation of the technical and technological base of working process and increase of the lower limit of professional qualification compatible with this kind of trend, then the number of 74,594 persons without qualifications or 42.1% of the complete number of unemployed, is a strong indicator of the bad perspective of this category of potential workers in the next period."

Velkovski (p71) then addresses the issue at the heart of this paper by referring to:

> "-----the extremely bad situation in the sphere of adult education and its placing on the margins of social interest, the chance of this category of unemployed and all the others with a lower educational level and degree of qualification, to change their qualification status by means of further education, changing of qualification or further qualification are depressingly small."

This point is constantly reiterated in the literature concerning adult and continuing education and training in Central and Eastern European countries.

Nor is the outlook for those in employment satisfactory in regard to employer support for lifelong learning. Taruskiene, writing about continuing professional development in Lithuania (1998, p143) could be considering the attitude of many employers in Central and Eastern Europe when she states that the outlook of employers is determined by:

> - 'Socio-cultural environment. Cultural values in society affect employers' outlook towards CPD of their employees. As long as a culture of lifelong learning is not consolidated in society, employers are unlikely to encourage CPD, even if they have resources to spare. A learning culture may be created within organisations, but it will not be achieved without the support of management. Therefore, it is important to introduce values of democratic leadership and learning organisations to management in Lithuania.
>
> - Legislative basis. Legislation supports CPD only for those unemployed who do not get a job within 6 months after they registered at the Labour Exchange. Generally, employers are neither directly (e.g. through taxation) nor indirectly encouraged to their employees'CPD.
>
> - Economic development of the country. The economic situation in Lithuania is unstable, legislation is changing constantly, and the system of taxation is unfavourable to business and industry. Many firms and enterprises are highly uncertain about their future and, therefore do not make long-term plans. In such a situation it does not seem wise to invest in employee CPD. Common practice is to look for competencies already available on the labour market.
>
> In general, employers are still passive with regard to CPD for their employees."

Intervention Strategies of the European Commission.

As mentioned above, the European Commission is now very active in regard to the political, social and especially the economic problems of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. It is now clear that nearly all of these countries wish to become members of the European Union at some time in the future. If this is to be the case a great deal of reform and reconstruction of all aspects of life and work will be necessary. While the European Council of Ministers and the European Parliament are broadly supportive of these accession aspirations, it is clear that they are not willing to pour unlimited amounts of money into the relevant countries in the hopes of improvements and modernisation. Those countries most willing to go forward under democratic and capitalistic economic principles are treated favourably in terms of strategically planned interventions involving EU derived resources (advice, expertise, finance, etc).

While much work is focused on the development of the physical infrastructure of these pre-accession countries, there is considerable concern to modernise the education and training systems. The aim is to help develop the capability of the countries to build and sustain modern societies through their own efforts. This policy has major implications for human resource development, and given the problems outlined above means that the European Commission is required to put much effort into developing strategies for vocational education and training in all the pre-accession countries. The European Training Foundation based in Turin has a major responsibility for this work, undertaking research and consultancy, and leading on initiatives to improve the situation, drawing upon the resources of the EU PHARE programme for reconstruction in each country. National 'observatories' for vocational education and training reform have been set up in support of this work. In the PHARE area, observatories have been set up in Albania, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania and Slovenia (European Training Foundation, 1997). The role played by PHARE funding can be best illustrated with reference to an example, such as Latvia. In 1994-1996 the PHARE programmes in Latvia were funded at the level of 5.5 million Euros (approximately the same amount in dollars at today's values). These programmes aim to support the initial modernisation and reforms of the vocational education and training system in the areas of curriculum development, teacher training, upgrading of teaching equipment, partnership with EU schools, education policy development and the dissemination of results. One of the programmes refers to the post secondary area in business and adult education. The focus on initial vocational training in the public sector is notable, and does not address the problem of establishing HRD policies for those in employment, or seeking employment in adult life. In the PHARE context, the EU emphasis on open and distance learning should be stressed. As already indicated, one of the issues coming out of the research, and further described below, is the lack of emphasis in former communist countries on methods of learning for adults which are not classroom based. The European Training Foundation is well aware of this problem and is now managing the PHARE Multi-Country Programme in Distance Education. This programme aims at promoting co-operation in the area of distance education among the PHARE assisted countries, including the promotion of co-operation between the PHARE region and EU member states. The programme will specifically support the establishment of trans-regional distance education infrastructure and the development of a substantial portfolio of distance education and training courses in the PHARE countries. National distance learning centres have been designated in each of the relevant countries, with a modest operating budget. Funding became available in 1997 for the development of distance learning course modules with an indicated budget of 4 million Euros (European Commission, 1997).

The literature reviewed above, further uncited sources, visits to some of the countries mentioned, and visitors from some of these and other relevant countries, have raised the three research questions listed at the beginning of this paper above other HRD related issues. While these data sources offer some insights and possibilities in the search for answers, the greatest help has come from research I have conducted with colleagues in the Baltic States and Slovenia. This has been carried out in the context of the LEONARDO Da VINCI Programme, which is a major initiative of the European Commission concerned with the improvement of initial and continuing vocational training in the EU countries. The research was conducted because this Programme is opening up to the pre-accession countries of Central and Eastern Europe. All of these countries are expected to face challenges in implementing this complex and demanding programme. The research was carried out to determine the state of readiness of the Baltic States and Slovenia to enter into this programme, and the priorities which should be addressed in terms of the HRD needs of these countries. A full and lengthy report of this research has been submitted to the European Commission (Chivers et al, 1997) and the next section summarises the empirical research strategy without revealing confidential details.

Given the way that data has accrued, some well before the broad research questions above were formulated, then the research approach is best described as inductive and drawing on the grounded theory model of Strauss and Corbin (1990). These authors hold that in complex areas of study involving many variables, and which initially are poorly perceived, researchers should not begin with a theory, and then try to prove it. Rather, they should begin with a broadly based inquiring approach, which is modified iteratively as data is collected and meaningful patterns can be determined from it. Thus, in this study, early involvement with vocational learning issues in Central and Eastern Europe indicated to the author that much was awry, but there was no initial clarity about the specific problems to address from a research viewpoint.

Empirical research in the Baltic States and Slovenia

The European Commission announced in Spring 1996 that a consulting team was sought to investigate the issues arising from the proposal to introduce the LEONARDO Da VINCI Programme in the Baltic States and Slovenia. A bid for this contract was prepared by myself and colleagues from the Division of Adult Continuing Education, University of Sheffield, in conjunction with the consultancy company UNECIA, which is a not-for-profit organisation based on a consortium of English universities which includes the University of Sheffield amongst its partner institutions. The bid was submitted by UNECIA in the summer of 1996 and proved successful in competition with many other bids.

The overall project involved six consultant researchers, including and overseen by myself, visiting the four countries for short periods (typically 3-5 days). A very large number of interviews were conducted by the researchers in these short periods, these being organised by the facilitators of the project in the four countries. These interviewees were mainly government civil servants with a strong background in vocational education and training. The interviews were usually carried out on a 1:1 basis in the premises of the person being interviewed, unless there was a need for an interpreter. Although a wide variety of experts from a large number of different organisations were interviewed, it was agreed that a semi-structured interview approach would be employed, utilising a standard set of 16 questions, followed by an open ended discussion. For the most part this procedure was followed, although some variation was necessary due to the behaviour of the interviewees. For example, some interviewees found certain questions irrelevant to their organisations, while others gave lengthy responses to early questions which in effect answered later ones.

The interviews were generally conducted over a 30-40 minute period, although some important figures were spoken with at greater length. The question responses were recorded as brief notes for each question, against each number, while an open ended discussion was summarised in writing and everything checked back with the interviewee at the end of the interview.

The interview questions moved from very general ones concerning the interviewee's definition of vocational education and training (VET) to their awareness of VET priorities in their country, through to their own current and proposed VET activities, and then to questions specific to the technical aspects of the LEONARDO Da VINCI programme and how it would benefit the country and their organisation.

The number of people interviewed in each country, and the nature of their organisations varied from country to country, partly due to the national circumstances but also because of the extent of preparation work carried out by the national facilitator. In Latvia for example 63 people were interviewed, with interviewees ranging from Ministry of Education officials, to university rectors and heads of vocational colleges, to staff of the Employers Confederation and the Chamber of Trade and Commerce. In Lithuania interviews with 48 people were conducted, covering a similar range of organisations. In Estonia 43 people (or in a few cases, groups of people) were interviewed, with a stronger focus on private sector employers and employers' organisations (as there are more of these in Estonia). Only 11 individual interviews were conducted in Slovenia, where there was more reliance on extensive reports in English, and focus group discussions with teams of staff from employing organisations.

The interviews and meetings produced a large volume of recorded data, which was written out more clearly on laptop computers during the country visits, and then brought back to the UK for analysis. The analysis was conducted on a country by country basis by those researchers who had undertaken the visit. The outcomes of the structured parts of the interviews were considered on a question by question basis, while the statements

recorded in the open ended discussions were read and re-read for key content until meaningful patterns and correlations were established.

Additionally, a large volume of reports was consulted, involving the national facilitators and colleagues in a great deal of translation work.

The draft reports were submitted to myself as research director, and I then read these and interviewed the visiting researchers to ascertain their own views and impressions. Where I was a researcher, I discussed my views on the visits undertaken with the other researcher who accompanied me for verification. All the researchers read the reports of the other research teams and raised points of clarification or concern.

I wrote the final report based largely on the findings of the country research teams, and this was checked by them and then submitted by UNECIA to the European Commission in June 1997. This report identified a large number of VET issues and needs in these countries, but nevertheless took a very positive line in terms of the possibilities of the LEONARDO Da VINCI programme operating effectively and beneficially in all the countries.

Following further development work in the Baltic States and Slovenia, these countries entered the Programme in 1998, soon after other pre-accession countries such as Poland and Hungary and the Czech Republic. Spin off work from this major research project has been conducted in Latvia and typifies the kind of ongoing development work I am conducting with partners in the pre-accession countries (Buligina and Chivers, 1998).

As well as generating a mass of detailed findings and recommendations, these formal studies are able to verify general overall impressions gained by the author from visits to these and other Central and Eastern European countries, attendance at conferences in these countries (and in Western Europe involving researchers from the pre-accession countries), and discussions with visitors to the University of Sheffield from these countries. The only relevant country with which there has been no direct face-to-face contact with national experts on VET is Slovakia. It should be noted that the author has also worked extensively in the east of Germany since 1989, in the context of vocational and higher education reform, retraining of the unemployed, and economic regeneration via small firm initiation and development.

The research results and findings reported below draw together the empirical data from the LEONARDO Da VINCI survey, with the author's reflections on all the contact he has had with VET and HRD experts in the pre-accession countries, and all the papers, reports, institutional brochures and other documents I have read about this subject over the past decade.

Research results and findings

It is notable in all the former communist countries that many features of everyday life remind one of Western Europe in the 1940's, despite the computers appearing on office desks and the televisions in many homes today. The communist 'command economy', and the almost total absence of commercial competition made for slow progress on all fronts. While this is most immediately noticeable to the visitor in terms of the state of the roads, the dearth of telephones, and the poor service in restaurants away from the capital cities, in fact the lack of change is most noticeable over time in the mentality of local people. Driefelds (1996, p11) argues that many people lived under regimes which went beyond authoritarianism to totalitarianism.

> "The most relevant distinction lies in the extensiveness and depth of the structural penetration of society by the state, and the almost total absence of independent organisations."

Unless people have lived in the West, or had a lot of contact with Westerners in their own country, their whole outlook, beliefs and values are likely to be closer to those of people in the 1940's in the west, rather than westerners in the 1990's. There is of course wide country to country variation, with some regions, such as the Baltic States, having been much more influenced by the extremes of the Soviet communist system. (Driefelds, 1996). Although people are well aware of how different life is in Western Europe (let alone North America), and although they want to introduce the changes which will allow them to rapidly catch up and

lead a modern, affluent life, they are much less aware of how out of step their mentality is from ways of thinking in the West.

The majority of people in Central and Eastern Europe for example still think in terms of stable employment patterns, despite the evidence in front of them of collapse of whole industries, and widespread unemployment. These are seen as aberrations arising from the collapse of the communist system rather than features of the global economy. In consequence, the state education and training systems are still geared to the development of young people for a stable labour market. To a considerable extent young people are still being selected and developed to undertake jobs that no longer exist in their region, and will doubtless never return. In other cases they are being developed to slot into specialist jobs which are predicted to be needed in the new, capitalistic future. In reality these jobs may never materialise, or will take a different form in terms of knowledge and skills needed from what was predicted. Trying to come to terms with strategies for initial education and training to prepare young people for an unstable and constantly changing labour market is difficult enough in the West, but is proving beyond the powers of imagination and creativity in some former communist countries as exemplified by Velkovski (1995).

Within work organisations there is rarely a recognisable human resource management function, (HRM), let alone an HRD function. In communist times the state sponsored trade unions looked after the welfare of workers in terms of working conditions, organised recreational activities in work groups, and pension rights. In the absence of wage negotiation responsibilities, the trade unions were able to devote their efforts in these directions and offered much group and individual advice and support. Management was not therefore required to interest itself in personnel matters (Ardagh, 1988).

When the communist system collapsed the trade unions also disappeared leaving a void in the people management area. In this situation it is hardly surprising that few companies have any recognisable HRD function, and there is much to do in building both the HRM and HRD functions in the pre-accession countries.

Further difficulties arise because of the ranking of science as a discipline above all others. This results in the most academically able young people being geared towards the study of mathematics and science (especially the physical sciences), in schools which specialise in these fields. Senior positions in academic life are held by scientists to a great extent, which further unbalances the education and training systems in societies where the study of psychology, sociology, as understood in the West, and western languages was discouraged. The vast majority of senior policy makers in government are also physical scientists and technologists by background, which limits their interest in, and understanding of HRD (Driefelds, 1996, p 129).

In regard to the learning needs of the adult population, these were seen in doctrinaire terms, and most continuing education provision was influenced by communist ideology. Vocational learning for those at work was seen as readily achievable in the workplace, because of the very slow rate at which job tasks changed. Retraining was rarely necessary since workers rarely changed their jobs, and certainly not their vocation. Higher professionals were exceptional in this respect, either because they were more influenced by scientific developments, or because of the need for them to have contact with the West. Even for such professionals, however, their further learning was more likely to be in the context of their advancement in the Communist Party rather than the direct needs of their professional work.

In the totally planned economy, young people were told what their work would be and where their job will be located, followed by many years of service with the same employer. Hence the need for human resource management at the company level was limited. HRD was an alien concept because there was no perceived need to purposefully develop workers, given that their work was not expected to change, and they were discouraged (or forbidden) from changing jobs, moving to another area for new work, etc. Even where the state allowed young people to choose their own career field and first job there was little scope for later career change (Ardagh, 1988, p 329).

Indeed, it has proved difficult to convince senior managers of organisations, and even senior educators that older workers are actually capable of significant new learning. This is especially notable when the learning need is seen to lie in the affective domaine. There is a deep belief in Central and Eastern Europe that interpersonal behaviour for example is unchangeable, and many well educated people would be sceptical of

proposals for any HRD programme that is focused on behavioural change in this context. Autleytner (1999) states that in Poland:

> 'Education for adults is a great but underestimated problem. Under communism it was assumed that a university diploma was lifetime insurance."

Equally problematic in the HRD context is the deep seated sexism and racism which abounds in Central and Eastern Europe. Again, in listening to discussions between local people the author has been much reminded of conversations between the older generations when he was a boy, when the strengths and limitations of people were seen as strongly bounded by their gender or ethnicity. Clearly the strongly affirmative equal opportunities assumptions embedded in Western HRD approaches today will struggle to find fertile ground in the former communist countries. The recent wars in the Balkans, and the treatment of minorities in many Central and Eastern European countries are testament to such deep seated attitudes.

Turning to teaching and learning methods, the very strong emphasis on didactic classroom based teaching is clearly related in part to the 'old fashioned' nature of society, alluded to above. Didactic approaches to teaching and learning at every level, from primary schooling, to company training and university teaching also held sway until recently in the West. Deference to authority was doubtless strongly established in the former communist countries, and respect for age, experience and wisdom a value that some in the West would appreciate today! In such respects these countries could perhaps be compared with the countries of South and East Asia, where didactic teaching methods still hold sway. In any education and training environment, reverence for the role and the power of the teacher will at least sustain, if not encourage, didactic teaching methods, and there is a big challenge to teacher and trainer educators to bring forward new learning methodologies through the next generation of teachers and HRD professionals. The new technologies are seen by younger people as exciting and certainly open up a window to the West. The first need is to convince policy makers and practitioners in the HRD field that people can learn well using computer based approaches, and be self-directed in their learning.

A further challenge will be to convince workers that important vocational learning needs to be carried out on an individual basis as well as in collective work groups. Such thinking cuts across the 'group activity' approach entrenched under communism. Trying to 'get ahead' of workmates by individual learning effort can still be seen as anti-social. As recently as 1987, Ardagh (1988, p332) was reporting on East Germany that:

> 'In other words, under their teachers' supervision these young people are set to watch and assess each other, in a manner that certainly militates against non-conformity."

This past history makes the introduction of open and distance learning difficult, although the glamour of the new technologies is clearly a countervailing force here.

Conclusions and recommendations

Currently, a great deal of money is being spent in Central and Eastern Europe to develop and modernise the state education and training systems in the hope that the next generation of workers will be ready to transform the political, social and especially the economic circumstances of each country. Much hope is being placed in the introduction of new technologies, and indeed it is true that experiential learning via computer use offers much hope for the future.

However, it is necessary to challenge very traditional thinking at all levels of society about: the nature of work; its organisation and transformation; the purposes of education; how differently people learn best; the affective domaine of learning; lifelong learning in and for work as well as for the good society; and power relations in the learning context.

As part of this challenge to change overall thinking, there is a challenge to western HRD professionals to demonstrate to senior managers in all kinds of work organisations the worth of HRD professionals, and the added value from developing the workforce on a continuing basis. Undoubtedly there is an important role for western companies based in Central and Eastern Europe, and who have a well developed HRD function, to

share their expertise with local company managers. There needs to be much more emphasis on bringing potential HRD managers from Central and Eastern Europe to the West for work placements alongside experienced HRD professionals. Educators and trainers in the public services need much more development to gain expertise in modern approaches to vocational learning, and a remit to develop learning programmes of benefit to small firms in their respective countries. The infrastructure for general adult education also needs to be rebuilt in many countries, and lifelong learning strongly promoted.

Western HRD professionals acting as consultants and advisers in Central and Eastern Europe require further development to gain deeper appreciation of the effects of 45 years of communism on the mentality, beliefs, values and behaviours of managers and workers in all kinds of work organisations in the relevant countries.. Throwing money at education institutions, and tinkering with curricula will have little effect long term if there are no real changes in the mentality of stakeholders in learning developments. This is clearly demonstrated in the case of Russia, where the problems discussed for the countries of Central and Eastern Europe are much more deep seated, and where major efforts are yielding poor returns (Adamson, 1999).

An old adult education adage is to Start where the learners are'. Open and distance learning systems involving computer conferencing and the Internet mean little to workers who have no access to computers in countries where a very average modern personal computer costs the average yearly wage of an industrial worker. Western management development courses for senior managers will have little meaning to senior industrial managers who were used to taking their daily instructions from Moscow, with no more autonomy than Americans would think normal for a shop floor supervisor. The more well meaning Westerners can understand how it was under communism, then the more help we can be to make a better tomorrow for our highly educated, hardworking, committed and long suffering colleagues in Central and Eastern Europe.

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Human Resource Professional Support for Work-Based Management Development

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This paper reports on some of the findings of a recent research project investigating senior human resource professionals' awareness and encouragement of 'work-based' management development. The main findings were that HR professionals were very enthusiastic about 'work-based' development, but were not well-informed about the forms that this could take; were uncertain about the acceptability of using developmental challenges; and did not have conscious strategies for support, guidance, and facilitation of learning through work-based activities. The implications of this are discussed within the context of implementing strategically-focused management development.

Keywords: Human Resources, Work-based, Development

In as much as it is possible to generalise, since the mid 1980s, the consensus is that in the UK, organisations are more aware of the strategic significance of management develeopment (albeit that this does not indicate a full integration within organisational strategic management processes) and more managers are involved in management development activity as measured in the number of 'off-the-job' training days. Constable and MacCormick, 1987; Handy, 1987; Institute of Management, 1994a; Institute of Management, 1994b; Thomson et. al., 1997).
However, this is being supported by smaller in-house management development teams aided by greater individual responsibility for self-development, and greater use of external management development consultants and flexible learning support. Finally, it is generally agreed that a larger proportion of management development activity is being undertaken on-the-job, and it is this issue which is of main concern to this paper. The popularity of work-based learning activities has been boosted by a number of business environment pressures and public policy initiatives. The identification and effective use of work-based learning opportunities have become essential means of underpinning corporate strategies of human resource development which emphasise competence-based development, organisational learning, personal development planning, self-development, and development for 'employability' within new psychological contracts. Growing flexibility of job roles means that continuous learning is more likely to take place through experiences at work.

The Research Problem

The problem is that although there are many studies exploring the relationship between work-based development and the HRD interventions mentioned above, we have little information on the extent to which those responsible for management development within organisations are actively encouraging and supporting work-based management development. The questionnaire surveys of respondents drawn from the Institute of Management membership database (supplemented with limited face to face or telephone interviews with senior HR personnel) present problems in terms of an appropriate research design, namely: lack of clarity and consensus over what constitutes 'on-the-job' or 'work-based management development', a tendency to focus upon formal developmental experiences; and a questionable assumption about the ability of individual respondents to provide reliable responses for their organisations (Woodall, 2000, forthcoming). In particular, the views of senior HR professionals responsible for management development appeared to be under-researched. If claims about organisational commitment to management development in the UK are to be authoritative, research may need to give more attention to the 'architects' of management development within organistaions, namely HR professionals plus other managers with this responsibility. Their perspective on the purposes and content of management development activity, within the wider HR policy and organisational context are central to understanding the scope and place of work-based management development.

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Theoretical Frame

The research design attempted to go beyond defining management development in terms of formal interventions, be they either 'off-the-job' or 'on-the-job' (see Table I). It drew upon the substantial US research in the field of adult learning, human resource development, and career development to generate a more inclusive set of workplace opportunities. With the exception of earlier work by Davies and Easterby-Smith (1984) and Burgoyne and Hodgson (1983), most of the research on how managers might use work-based learning opportunities originates in the US (Dechant, 1994; McCall et al, 1988; McCauley et al, 1994, 1995; Marsick and Watkins, 1990, 1997). To date, very little of this has been assimilated within UK research on management development.

Table I An overview of work-based development methods

Method	Learning Process
Learning from another person	
Coaching	Feedback, reflection, challenge
Mentoring and sponsorship	Support, advice, feedback, opportunity, challenge
Role models	Observation, reflection, imitation
Learning from tasks	
Special projects	Problem-solving, taking responsibility, taking risks, making decisions, managing without mastering
Job rotation	Exposure to other cultures and views
Shadowing	Observation of new tasks, techniques, skills
Secondment	Exposure to other cultures and views
Acting up/delegation	Trial of new tasks, techniques, skills, and challenges
Learning with others	
Task forces/working parties	Strategic understanding, building awareness and confidence
Action learning	Problem solving, interaction, influencing
Networking	Interaction and building awareness

Source: J. Woodall and D. Winstanley. 1998 *Management Development: Strategy and Practice.* Oxford: Blackwell, p. 187.

Marsick and Watkins (1990, 1997) drew attention to individual ability to learn from trial and error' in everyday tasks and interactions, but at the same time argued that organisations needed to support individuals in maintaining an openness towards new experiences and perspectives, in disciplined reflection, and in translating learning into practice. Other research would emphasise the importance of providing support in critical reflection (Brookfield, 1987; Mezirow, 1991) or 'guided reflection' (Wood- Daudelin, 1996) as a means to get individuals to challenge their own underlying frameworks of assumptions.

Conversely, McCauley et al (1994, 1995) take a 'tough love' approach when they argue that on-the-job learning is most likely to occur when managers are faced with challenging situations which place them in dynamic settings full of problems to resolve under conditions of risk and uncertainty. Their empirical research based upon the fifteen item 'Developmental Challenge Profile' (McCauley et al, 1995) which identified a number of developmental components of managerial jobs encountered in work situations involving transition, creating change, high level responsibility, non authority relationships and obstacles. They found that the degree to which managers are exposed to the developmental challenges was dependent upon a combination of personal qualities (a proactive 'self-starting' managerial style was advantageous), gender, job-related tasks (such as special projects, tasks for membership, job-rotation, cross-functional teams and internal secondment) and work-context.

Research Questions

The research reported on here was commissioned by the Institute of Personnel and Development, and conducted during 1998. It focused on human resource manager perceptions and experience of using work-based management development as part of their overall organisational management development policy. The underlying assumption for this research design was that corporate support for work-based management development would depend largely upon HR professionals' awareness of the range of development interventions and the support required. In the absence of this it could be assumed that the managerial workforce would be unlikely to make effective use of this way of learning. The main research questions were:

- are senior HR and management development professionals fully aware of the whole range of formal work-based development activities (see Table I) plus the possibility of informal and incidental learning?
- do senior HR and management development professionals recognise the significance of developmental challenges (see Table II) as a means of learning?
- how aware are senior HR and management development professionals of the need for organisational support and resources for guidance and facilitation of such learning?
- and what do senior HR and management development professionals perceive to be the main factors and obstacles to effective work-based management development?

Research Design and Methodology

An interpretative research design was used (see below), with a purposive sample of organisations judged by a panel of experts (officers of the UK Institute of Personnel and Development, plus other academic researchers on management development) to be confronted with radical change in their business environment of a magnitude that would encourage them to give particular attention to management development. In addition the original intention was to ensure a broad spread of organizations across different sectors: information technology systems and software development, retail, leisure and tourism, financial services, engineering and public services. and to include some SMEs employing 50-199 employees as well as larger employers. Problems of access were only experienced in the IT sector as a number of organisations were in the process of introducing radical structural change and so were understandably reluctant to participate. Also, in the end only four organisations with 50-199 employees were included, and organisational size by employment ranged from a food retailer with 130,000, four organisations employing between 40,000 and 60,000, eight employing between 5,000 and 25,000, and a further eight employing between 1,000 and 5,000. The remaining were five medium sized organisations employing between 200-999 employees - a total of 31 organisations. All the organisations were given pseudonyms to maintain confidentiality (see Table II)

Table II Organisations Participating in the Research

Company (by sector)	Numbers employed	Company (by sector)	Numbers employed
Retail		**Financial Services**	
Familystore	1,300	RFSO1	50,000
Cosmetico	2,000	RFSO2	52,000
Superco	130,000	Insuranceco	7,800
Bookco	13,000	Big Six	7,500
Qualitystore	17,000	AC1	600
		AC2	350
Leisure and Tourism		**Engineering and Construction**	
Fast-eat	40,000	Oilexplore	25,000 (UK only)
Fitco	1,700	Oilenge	60,000 (worldwide)
Museum	800	Paperco	4,500 (UK); 19,500 (worldwide)
Theme-eat	180		
Theme Park	200	Constructco	5,000 (worldwide)
		Marinenge	200 (UK)
		Boxenge	28
Public Sector			
Government I	3,500 (plus 46,000 in agencies)	**Information Technology**	
		Infotec A	2,000 (UK); 4,000(worldwide)
Government II	25,000		
Government III	37,000	Infotec B	20
Trader	1,000		

South County	25,000
NHS Trust	3,800
CCT	100

Data were collected by semi-structured interviews with key informants. These were senior HR managers responsible for devising management development policy for their organization - or other members of the senior management team who held this responsibility. The interview schedule was designed to collect basic factual information about management development activity for middle and senior level management (supervisors and first line managers were excluded), as well as key informants' perceptions around a number of themes, including:

- major business issues of current strategic concern
- the overall aims and principles underpinning management development policy
- the formal elements and framework for delivering that policy including succession planning arrangements
- awareness of a range of formal work-based management development activity (see Table I), and the extent to which these were encouraged and supported
- recognition and encouragement of the potential to learn from developmental challenges (see Table II)
- support for managers and line managers in identifying, using, and reflecting upon such development opportunities

This paper reports on findings relating to the last three points: namely the awareness of the range of work-based management development activity and support for this. Work-based development was defined as:

> *development that occurs in the course of or as a consequence of the real work activities that constitute a manager's job role.*

The interviews took place in 1998, and were supplemented by analysis of documentation supplied by the organisations, including management development policy statements, and frameworks for delivering support, competence frameworks, learning support materials, and performance appraisal documentation.

Most interviews lasted an average of 75 minutes, with some very much longer, and a couple just under 60 minutes. In five organizations the research team interviewed more than one respondent, and in three of these, senior HR and management development professionals were interviewed together. Interview transcripts were compiled immediately after each interview. Although the semi-structured interview schedule provided a template for reporting responses to the more open questions were scrutinised to identify relevant units of data. These were then organised into themes. Both members of the research team participated in independent review of the interview transcripts, in order to identify relevant themes and units of meaning, and subsequently to confirm analysis of the findings by sector as well as in general. The aims were to follow the conventions of qualitative data analysis that would meet the criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln and Guba 1985: 316; Denzin and Lincoln, 1994).

Findings

HR Professional Awareness and Use of Work-Based Development Interventions

There appeared to be tremendous enthusiasm for management learning from everyday work activities: *It's almost the only way there is'* (Quality store) *the most important vehicle for learning* (RFSO2) *hour-for-hour you get much more from work-based activities than you do from going on a course* (Marinenge)

However, when pressed, most respondents were unable to elaborate upon what this might involve, and conceded that it was left to chance: *We do it by chance, rather than in a planned and recognised manner* (Family Store) *It is a question of trying to get people to think in terms other than courses for management development* (Museum)*It has happened, but it has been done by default* (Superco) *It's limited - things are happening, but people are not learning* (AC1)

When asked about which of the most commonly recognised forms of formal work-based management development (see Table I) were consciously promoted, most respondents only identified coaching and special projects. Role models, shadowing, mentoring, and secondment only received indirect encouragement. Acting-up

(deputising for a manager in their absence) and delegation were not perceived as developmental tools, but rather as operational necessities. Job rotation and Action Learning were seldom used (many respondents were unfamiliar with the latter). Coaching was seen as the key work-based management development intervention by almost all those interviewed (with the exception of some public sector organisations and one organisation in engineering and construction), but explicit guidance on using both coaching and special projects was rare. Surprisingly, HR professionals responsible for management development were often unclear about what other work-based management development tools might be used, and when and how to use them.

HR Professional recognition of the Significance of Developmental Challenges

There was little immediate recognition of the development potential of both positive and negative challenges (see Table III) that commonly arise in the course of everyday work experiences: *We are still in our infancy - we are trying to encourage more of such learning* (Bookco); *The trouble is that many of these are not perceived as learning opportunities. People do not think about the opportunities and career development created in handling a mature, declining business.* (Paperco); *All (developmental challenges) stretch in different ways, confronting traditional assumptions about how people learn...crisis situations demand challenge - having to solve problems that individuals have not come across before. Things spin off from what they are doing day-to-day and stretch them* (Big Six)

Table III The developmental potential of positive and negative challenges: the perceptions of senior human resource professionals responsible for management development

Challenges that are most developmental	high profile responsibility developing new directions unfamiliar responsibilities influencing without authority
Challenges that are unwelcome operational responsibilities	dealing with inherited problems making decisions on cutbacks dealing with difficult/incompetent employees managing a diverse area of work handling a high workload
Challenges that are definitely not developmental	handling adverse business conditions dealing with a lack of top management support dealing with a lack of peer support handling a difficult boss

Not a single organization specifically encouraged learning from developmental challenges, although many HR and management development professionals admitted that on reflection they could cite examples of learning in this way. A pattern emerged whereby the most positive challenges of 'high profile responsibility', 'developing new directions', 'unfamiliar responsibilities', and 'influencing without authority' were more likely to be perceived as developmental. The more negative experiences ('dealing with inherited problems', 'making decisions on cutbacks', 'dealing with difficult/incompetent employees', ' managing a diverse area of work', 'handling a high workload') were seen as unwelcome operational requirements of the job. There was near universal agreement that obstacles such as 'handling adverse business conditions', 'dealing with a lack of top management support', 'dealing with a lack of peer support', and 'handling a difficult boss', were most unlikely to be developmental (see Table III).

Provision of Support, Guidance and Facilitation for Learning through Work Activities.

The HR and management development professionals were questioned in depth about organisational arrangements for support, guidance, and facilitation of such learning. While this involved consideration of the use of established HR tools such as personal development plans, learning contracts, learning logs and diaries, plus other examples of guided reflection, the scope of enquiry extended into wider aspects of HRM policy and practice and organisational culture. In many cases these factors did not provide an encouraging environment for work-based management development. *Peoples expectations are built around upward promotion, but because of the*

flatter organisation, development has to be in and around the job....where managers are under a lot of heavy pressures, it can be hard to get people to use developmental tools - development of individuals tends to take second place...'(Oilexplore); *we are an aggressive, demanding organisation in terms of time* (Paperco); *this organisation does not look at what individuals have put into a job - as long as they achieve their objectives, we dont look at other things'* (Government II).;*we are an organisation full of activists and pragmatists, with few reflectors - it is very difficult for the latter to operate and be valued'(* South County); *as a culture, we are the least reflective organisation I have met in my life - there is a constant focus upon active learning* (Cosmetico); *in the past five years we have moved from a 'done-to'culture, and now it's more of the 'if it's to be it's up to me' culture'* (RFSO2).

Most organisations made use of personal development plans, but this was usually as a follow-up mechanism to a formal off the job development programme or as part of a competence-based approach. Yet there appeared to be little facilitation of PDPs, and few resources devoted to supporting guided reflection: scant use was made of learning logs and diaries, personal development planning workshops or individual development counselling. Espoused learning cultures of self-development (see below) were not embedded, and unless there was regular follow-up activity on the part of both line managers and HR and management development professionals, it was readily admitted that such instruments as PDPs, learning logs etc. would rapidly fall into disuse. Action learning was perceived as a useful means of encouraging learning from developmental challenges in two public sector organisations (South County' and 'NHS). Some organisations in the public sector ('Government II', 'South County', and 'CCT'), plus others in engineering (' Oilexplore', ' Oilenge') provided encouragement for mentoring and networking

The wider HRM policy environment appeared to be an important factor. The general trend towards slimmer central HR teams, aided by internal HR consultants in business units within a framework of devolved responsibility, had limited both the availability of HR and management development professional support. In particular, facilitation of work-based managerial learning by developing the awareness and skills of line managers, and the ability to control implementation of central policy was reported to be severely constrained. Every respondent cited lack of time as the key-limiting factor in providing support. In addition managers in delayered organisations were perceived to be more cautious and risk-averse, and reluctant to take on negative challenges (see Table IV) which provide potentially rich learning opportunities. Also, the ratio of the managerial workforce to other employees was an indication of how much time and support were available for management development. Small managerial workforces in leisure and tourism, contrasted with the higher ratio of managers to employees in retail, financial services, the public sector and engineering and construction.

Furthermore, other HR policy developments can obstruct work-based management development. This is particularly true of performance management systems. A focus upon tasks, objectives and outcomes gives priority to short-term considerations, and squeezes out long term development. This goes a considerable way to explaining the poor record of line managers in facilitating the development of their direct reports. Line managers may potentially have a key role in assisting development through providing an opportunity for debriefing and guided reflection, but with little training in coaching skills, and a strong signal that meeting targets is the priority, this is unlikely to show the desired result. There was only patchy evidence of the use of separate development reviews (mainly in the IT, retail and public sectors), and training in development skills for managers was only noticeably in evidence among retail and public sector organisations. Elsewhere in financial services organisations, it tended to be narrowly focused upon conducting appraisal and personal development plans. While obviously this is significant for the rest of the workforce, it is particularly important in respect of the development of junior and middle managers.

Another HR process that can obstruct integration of work-based management development within the wider HR policy environment is succession planning. Nearly every respondent acknowledged the importance they attributed to succession planning, but in the same breath admitted to current shortcomings. The most sophisticated succession planning systems were to be found in 'Superco', ' Qualitystore', ' Bookco', 'Big Six', ' Oilexplore', and 'NHS Trust'. Other financial services organisations ('RFSO1', 'RFSO2', and ' Insureco) also had sophisticated charting and software systems, but these were becoming increasingly irrelevant in the context of ever more frequent organisational restructuring. A similar experience was encountered by many of the central government organisations. Yet, even here it was admitted that succession planning decisions are often based on informal impressions rather than recorded information - especially that available via the personal development planning process. Although respondents recognised that the recorded experience of work-based management development potentially provides an important basis for succession planning decisions, they admitted that their succession

planning arrangements made no attempt to draw upon anything more systematic than anecdotal evidence of such activity - a situation that gives concern on grounds of both efficiency and equity. Postings were usually dealt with in an ad hoc manner with strong involvement from the senior management team, and hence, image, exposure and impression management were important.

There are a number of issues that arise in respect of organisation culture and leadership style, and especially the 'learning culture' of an organisation. Many organisations had espoused a self-development culture within a competency framework, but as already mentioned, a task- or client-focused culture can inhibit individual managers from giving priority to development. It is possible that total quality management processes with a 'right first time' ethos can encourage risk aversion and discourage the use of informal learning experiences and developmental challenges which do not have guaranteed positive outcomes. In the same vein, negative learning experiences, and especially the use of negative developmental challenges might be shunned as unacceptable within a positive learning culture. That 'dealing with inherited problems', 'making decisions on cutbacks', 'dealing with a lack of top management support', and a 'difficult boss' (see Table IV) might be developmental given appropriate support was inconceivable even in organisations which were highly committed to work-based development (Quality Store, Oilexplore).

Finally, two other aspects of learning culture are relevant. Many organisations were so task-focused that the use of time to reflect on learning was perceived as an indication of individual underperformance! Only in the large accountancy practice (Big Six) was there an awareness that line managers needed to provide an opportunity for reflection and debriefing upon experience, in order for learning to take place, but even there, access to certain developmental challenges was highly dependent upon seniority and experience. Other organisations (especially in retail financial services and the public sector) were making the painful transition from a passive to an active learning culture. Management styles, in certain industries - especially the leisure industry were far from empowering, and a transactional 'tell' leadership style constrained the ability of managers to take advantage of work-based learning opportunities, as did a lack of senior management commitment to learning.

Conclusion

It was quite clear, that senior HR and management development professionals were enthusiastic about work-based development. There was overwhelming evidence that they thought that the workplace was the most important place for management learning. Yet, even where a high level of professional expertise might be expected, there was little awareness of the full range of formal work-based interventions and potential developmental challenges that could be used and little systematic promotion and support for this way of learning - learning in the workplace was expected to 'happen' as a consequence of individual managerial work on personal development plans. This increased reliance upon work-based learning as a key component of management development policy does not sit easily with the lack of active promotion and support. It certainly begs the question of whether more managers are actively self-developing and making effective use of work-based learning experiences in the absence of opportunities for guided reflection.

The are also wider implications for the strategic role of management development. Even if it is conceded that management development is seldom well integrated with wider corporate strategy, it is even doubtful whether it is well integrated with other HR processes, especially performance management, and succession planning. Contrary to recent research (Armstrong and Barron, 1998), development processes may be suffering in the context of integrated 'all-singing-all-dancing' performance management systems, and the failure to rethink succession planning in favour of a bottom-up 'developing potential' approach (Hirsh, 1990; Hirsh and Jackson, 1995) is indicative of weak internal HR policy integration.

Both of the above points have important implications for HR professionals who are responsible for management development. Firstly they need to be made more aware of the full range of work-based management development interventions, including developmental challenges, and how this relates to informal and incidental learning. Secondly, if greater reliance is to be placed on work-based management development as part of organisational management development strategy, then HR and management development professionals need to assemble the resources required for support and facilitation. In particular, more management development specialists will be needed, working either as internal or external consultants to line managers, offering support in coaching skills, running personal development planning workshops, and providing confidential individual development counselling. Finally, HR professionals need to scrutinise other aspects of HR policy and practice (especially

performance management and succession planning arrangements) to ensure that they compliment and do not impede the effectiveness of work-based management development. Performance management systems are needed that create the space for separate development reviews with sufficient time for reflection, and which have as a key performance indicator evidence of line manager facilitation of the development of their direct reports. Similarly, without resorting to excessive bureaucratic record keeping, succession planning that draws upon more valid and reliable evidence from personal development plans is to be encouraged.

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